

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 271515Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3484
INFO AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T JIDDA 0621

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS USMTM DHAHRAN AND SECDEF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, YE, UR

SUBJECT: SAUDI PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET ARMS AID TO YAR

REF JIDDA 464

1. AT A MEETING YESTERDAY (JAN 26) IN RIYADH AT SAG
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION (MODA) YEMEN PROJECT OFFICER
COL FALAH DHAHIRI EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND DISBELIEF AT
REPORTS OF MAJOR SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS TO YAR. IN RESPONSE
TO QUESTION ABOUT WHAT DHAHIRI HAD HEARD ABOUT SOVIET ARMS
SHIPMENTS TO YAR DURING HIS RECENT VISIT (JAN 19-22) TO
SANA AS PART OF A MODA TEAM, HE SAID: "THE YEMENIS ARE
GETTING REPLACEMENTS FOR MIG-17S AND 30 OR 34 MOTORS FOR
OLD TANKS. I THINK WE ARE GOING TO GET A COMPLETE LIST FROM
THE YEMENIS." DHAHIIVCMS THEN ASKED IF HE HAD HEARD REPORTS
CIRCULATING IN SANA THAT MIG-21S AND MODERN TANKS WERE IN-
CLUDED IN THE SHIPMENTS.8OVVAID: "YOU KNOW THE SOVIETS.
THE YEMENIS ARE NOT RPT NOT IN A POSITION TO PLAY GAMES
WITH US. WE ARE GIVING THEM EVERYTYING...SUPPORTING THEM
IN EVERY ASPECT. I THIKVPRESIDENT HAMDI IS CLEAR...I
DONT THINK PRESIDENT HAMDI IS PRO-RUSSIAN."

2. DHAHIRI SAID HE HAD EXTENSIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YAR
DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF AND ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF

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LT. COL. GHASHMI AND THAT DURING THEIR TALKS THERE WAS NO

RPT NO MENTION OF MORE THAN REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT FROM THE SOVIET SHIPMENT.

3. DHAHIRI WAS QUITE KEEN ON THE USG RESPONDING ASAP TO SAG REQUESTS FOR EQUIPMENT TO MODERNIZE THE YAR ARMY AND ADDED: "THE RUSSIANS ARE TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM (THE YEMENIS) THAT THEY ARE FASTER THAN WE ARE. WE HAVE TO PROVE THAT WE ARE BEING RESPONSIVE AND THAT WE WILL BACK THEM."

4. DHAHIRI ALSO SAID MODA WOULD LIKE THE USG TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YAR OFFICERS TO STUDY IN THE US (MORE THAN THE 6 WHO ARE THERE NOW) AS A COUNTER TO A SOVIET INVITATION FOR MORE THAN 800 OFFICERS TO STUDY IN RUSSIA. "THE RUSSIAN OFFERED THAT MANY PLACES ONLY KNOWING THAT YEMEN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE NEARLY THAT MANY," DHAHIRI'S ASSISTANT ADDED.

5. COMMENT: IF SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS TO YAR EXCEED SAUDI EXPECTATIONS, SAUDIS WILL BE CRITICAL AND SUSPICIOUS OF HAMDI. (REFTEL)

6. ASSUME WE WILL BE SEEING WITHIN DAY OR SO WHAT IF ANYTHING ARRIVES AT HODEIDA NAD HASTE THEREFORE SEEMS UNDESIRABLE. IF NOTHING ARRIVES, HAMDI (OR SOMEONE) HAS BEEN PLAYING GAMES WITH US. IF SUBSTANTIAL SHIPMENT ARRIVES HAMDI IS A CAD AND WE SHOULD HOLD OFF REACTING UNTIL WE AND SAUDIS LOOK INTO MATTER.

7. IN MEANTIME WE ARE SOMEWHAT BEMUSED BY YARG'S "DEEP CONCERN WITH GROWING ABILITY OF SOVIETS TO PROJECT POWER THROUGH THEIR OWN MILITARY MEANS DWKNTROUGH RADICAL REGIMES" LIKE PDRY. IT ALL SEEMS RATHER UNREAL.
PORTER

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED.

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